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Dasia.Clemente@jfs.ohio.gov**ODJFS/Mercy Health lead nation in study
to help ill and injured workers keep their jobs**

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder announced today that Ohio has exceeded enrollment goals in a study to see whether providing intensive care coordination for workers with non-occupational illnesses or injuries hastens their recovery. Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network ([RETAIN](#)) is a national project being paid for in Ohio through an \$18 million federal grant. More than 3,500 Ohioans representing more than 350 Ohio employers are enrolled.

In collaboration with Mercy Health, the official provider partner for RETAIN Ohio, Ohio was the first state in the nation to exceed the goal of 3,500 participants and has more employers enrolled than any other state. In addition, the study results have been very positive: Nearly 80% of ill or injured workers who received services have been able to keep working or return to work after their recovery, decreasing their chances of experiencing a long-term disability. Participants do not include individuals injured on the job or with workplace-related illnesses.

“Research shows that those with illnesses or injuries that occurred outside of work are at a high risk of becoming unemployed. This can have devastating effects for both them and their families,” Director Damschroder said. “Through RETAIN, we are using proven strategies to prevent this downward spiral and help ill and injured workers stay employed or return to work as soon as medically possible.”

The study started in Northeast Ohio but has since expanded to the Northwest and Southwest parts of the state, as well. It’s available to 18- to 65-year-old workers who live in Butler, Clermont, Columbiana, Hamilton, Lucas, Mahoning, Trumbull, or Warren counties and who have non-occupational illnesses or injuries that affect their ability to work.

When individuals in this situation seek treatment at a Mercy Health facility, they’re given the opportunity to participate. If they agree, they are assigned either to a care coordination group or to a comparison group for research purposes. Those in the care coordination group are assigned to a health services coordinator, who then communicates with their employer, health care provider, and insurer to facilitate a return to work. The employer may provide workplace accommodations and adjusted duties for them, and the coordinator may refer them to OhioMeansJobs Center partners for additional assistance. In addition, they gain access to a social worker to assist with any identified psychological or social needs by providing community resources and potential financial assistance if applicable.





Mike DeWine, Governor | Jon Husted, Lt. Governor | Matt Damschroder, Director

“I feel the patients enrolled have benefited from the RETAIN program,” said Paige Austin, a certified physician assistant with Mercy Health. “The amount of resources and information provided to the patients is excellent. I feel the best part of RETAIN is the ability of the program to help patients (especially our post-operative patients) to get back to work and attain a rather normal lifestyle as they were carrying out prior to surgery. I would absolutely recommend RETAIN.”

The project started in January 2022 and may end in May 2024. A third-party evaluator will use rigorous methodology to identify program outcomes. In the meantime, a RETAIN Roundtable comprised of medical, industry, and government stakeholders is identifying and sharing best practices.

The project’s leadership team includes representatives from Mercy Health, the Governor’s Executive Workforce Board, the Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation, the Ohio Department of Health, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, and Workforce Development Boards 9, 12, 13, 17, and 18.

For more information, visit retainOH.com or listen to this Mercy Health [podcast](#).

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.

